

Columbia Missourian

74th Year — No. 268

Good Morning! It's Thursday, July 29, 1982

2 Sections — 12 Pages — 25 Cents

Reagan renews his economic promises

WASHINGTON (UPI) — During his 12th news conference, President Reagan vowed Wednesday to stick with his economic program.

He declared that "slowly, surely we are working our way back to prosperity."

The president said that real income is increasing because of the decline of inflation and his tax cut, retail sales are up 12 percent on an annual basis and interest rates are inching downward.

He forecast a recovery in the second quarter of this year but wouldn't say how much.

The president said the resolution in Congress to require a balanced budget was a key ingredient to recovery and said he will not change economic horses in midstream.

"I'm not through with cutting in spending — I'm going to ask for more," Reagan vowed.

Referring to foreign affairs, Reagan said he is optimistic ambassador Philip Habib will negotiate a peaceful withdrawal of armed PLO troops from Lebanon, followed by a withdrawal of Israeli and Syrian troops. Reagan said he has "no second thoughts"

about banning export of American technology to Russia to build a gas pipeline through Siberia to eastern Europe. He said that decision is not inconsistent with the expected announcement that the United States will continue to sell grain to the Soviets.

"Technology for the pipeline is obtainable only from the United States... grain they can obtain elsewhere," Reagan said. He added that the earlier grain embargo on Russia was an economic blow to farmers."

He said in addition grain sales required a drain of hard dollars from the Soviet econ-

omy while completion of the pipeline would result in an influx of oil money to Russia.

On other matters, Reagan said:

Interior Secretary James Watt should not be fired because of a letter he wrote suggesting that American support of Israel might be cut if American Jews did not support his energy policy, including offshore oil drilling. Reagan said what Watt meant was that "If we should find ourselves without the energy to turn the wheels of industry we wouldn't be much of an ally to anybody and that includes Israel."

✓ The U.S. wants to "continue developing" the relationship with China that President Nixon started, "but at the same time we are not going to abandon our long time alliance with Taiwan — it is a moral obligation we will not forget."

✓ A summit with the Soviet Union may be a way off.

✓ In the next few days, State Department observers will give testimony justifying their report that human rights have improved in El Salvador.

BIG TRUCKS

PSC's limited authority hinder's highway safety

"Why did you stop me?" the Consolidated Freightways trucker at a Missouri weigh station grumbled. "The guy who came through here before me didn't have any mudflaps. His signal lights didn't even work. He was a piece of junk."

"He was a private carrier," replied PSC inspector Bob Jordan.

"So what?"

"We don't have the authority to inspect private carriers," Jordan explained.

"Politics!" mused the trucker with a shake of his head.

By Phyllis C. Watt
State capital bureau

JEFFERSON CITY — The Public Service Commission, which sets the state's truck safety standards, does not have legal authority over private carriers who make up nearly half the trucks on Missouri's highways.

Private carriers haul only goods produced by their owners; for instance, grocery firms and oil compa-

Inspectors can enforce the stringent PSC safety regulations only on truck companies and independent truckers.

State law grants the Highway Patrol the power to enforce certain governing operations by private carriers, but it cannot enforce vital PSC regulations such as those addressing excessive driving hours or defects in tires, suspension, steering and the fuel system.

Though PSC regulations establish specific standards for brake systems on company or independent trucks, for example, the law governing private carriers requires only "two sets of adequate brakes." The state attorney general's office has interpreted that phrase to mean a private carrier can legally operate with brakes on the truck's tractor but not its trailer, says Sgt. Larry Anderson of the Highway Patrol's Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division.

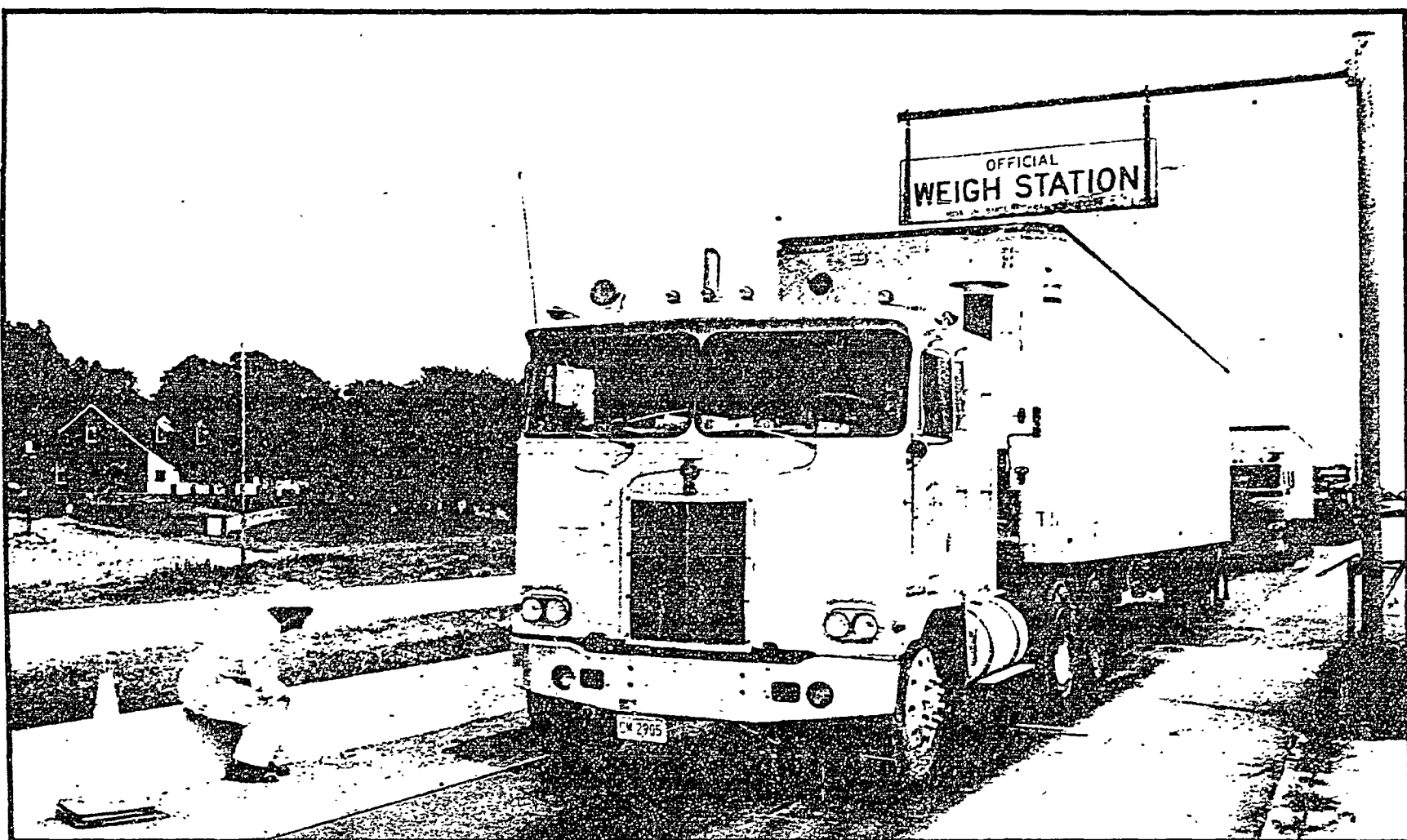
Among the private trucks inspected by the patrol, the rate and type of safety hazards were nearly equal to those found in common carriers. But in many cases, the Highway Patrol was powerless to take action.

The only agency that can force private carriers to comply with the full range of safety standards is the Motor Carrier Safety Bureau, a federal agency that has only four field inspectors in Missouri. And these inspectors can only stop trucks involved in interstate commerce. If the vehicles ship entirely within Missouri, they are subject only to limited state law.

Federal inspector Wayne Cole says the logical solution would be legislation to expand PSC regulations to include private carriers.

But John Hahn, executive director of Missouri Oil Jobbers Association, says hauling goods is only incidental to the business of most oil companies. He says oil trucks and other

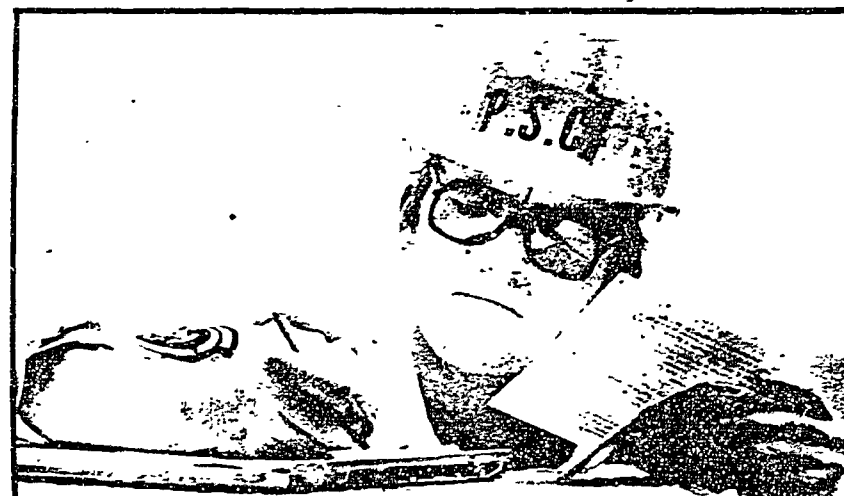
(See OIL, Page 8A)



At the St. Peters weigh station, PSC inspector Skip Radley looks for code violations like damaged tires.



Radley checks brakes while the truck keeps rolling



Citations require truckers to correct all violations

Insight

nies. Missouri law exempts such trucks from PSC regulation.

"Even if we see defects or hear air leaks (in the brake system), we can't inspect," PSC inspector Bob Jordan complains.

Mechanical defects have been cited as contributing factors in many truck accidents. Occupants of cars often pay the penalty. For every trucker killed in truck-car crashes, 32 car passengers die.

Safety inspections can play an important role in keeping hazardous trucks off the highways. The number of truck-at-fault accidents in California has decreased 30 percent in the past three years as the inspection effort there has increased.

Missouri's PSC and Highway Patrol haven't been as effective.

Israel demands PLO make commitment

By The Associated Press

Israel set a new deadline for the PLO to leave west Beirut and hammered the guerrillas from land, sea and air Wednesday. In response, the Reagan administration said "the bloodshed must stop" and tried to work out a new cease-fire.

Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin said U.S. special envoy Philip C. Habib told him he would seek an "unequivocal commitment" from Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization to vacate west Beirut. Be-

gin said Habib would have the PLO's answer by Friday.

The Israeli leader said he told Habib such a commitment was necessary to stop the 35,000 Israeli troops and 300 tanks surrounding the Lebanese capital's Moslem sector from wiping out the 8,000 guerrillas trapped inside.

Habib returned to Lebanon from Jerusalem, capping his weeklong shuttle in the Middle East and Europe seeking new ways to evacuate the PLO from Lebanon. Israeli newspapers said Habib hoped Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Jordan would each take some of

the PLO fighters.

Shortly after Habib's return to Beirut, Lebanon's Prime Minister Shafik Wazzan said efforts were under way with Israel and the PLO to call a cease-fire for Wednesday evening.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Dean Fischer said, "It is the source of the greatest possible regret to us that many innocent people have been killed and wounded as a result of the breakdown of the cease-fire in Beirut. Ambassador Habib is currently engaged in trying to restore a cease-fire, which

not only would spare lives and property damage, but would also permit headway in political negotiations. We call on all the combatants involved to reinstate the cease-fire in place. The bloodshed must stop."

Lebanon's Moslem elder statesman and former prime minister, Saeb Salam, asked in Beirut whether the PLO was ready to vacate Beirut, said the guerrillas "were ready right now, but the question is to let them leave and not bombard everybody to death before they leave."

MP&L rejects PSC's findings in fire probe

By Joe Stinebaker
State capital bureau

JEFFERSON CITY — A Missouri Power and Light Co. attorney Wednesday denied a claim that failure of a relief valve contributed to fires that caused an estimated \$1.3 million in damage in Centralia six months ago.

Responding to a Missouri Public Service Commission report laying blame for the series of fires on MP&L and the City of Centralia, MP&L general attorney Gary Duffy said the valve "was in operation and did operate." However, he refused to elaborate.

The fires erupted about 10:30 a.m. Jan. 28 after Alvin Jacobs, a city backhoe operator accidentally severed a regulator-control line while attempting to clear a blocked culvert. High-pressure gas then surged into the low-pressure system that serves Centralia.

The sudden burst of pressure resulted in numerous explosions and fires throughout the city. Five people were injured, none seriously.

The PSC staff report maintains (See PSC, Page 8A)

Boy becomes surprise witness in trial of child abuse suspect

The 7-year-old victim in a bizarre child abuse case was the surprise witness Wednesday in the trial of his mother's boyfriend.

Dejan Kocovski, who allegedly was locked in the basement of a Cape Girardeau home for three months, walked to the witness stand hand-in-hand with Cape Girardeau County Prosecutor Steve Limbaugh. The boy's neat, healthy appearance contrasted sharply with descriptions of his appearance when discovered April 13 on the basement floor of a burning Cape Girardeau house. Dejan reportedly weighed only 32 pounds that night and was unconscious and coughing up a sludgy mixture of ash and mucus.

In the words of a doctor who testified Wednesday: "We didn't think he was going to make it through the night."

Dejan's mother, 27-year-old Olga Kocovski, and her Pakistani boyfriend, 23-year-old Akbar Esker, are accused of locking the child in the basement from January until the time of the fire. The case has attracted national attention largely be-



Dejan Kocovski
At his birthday party in 1980

cause of legal complexities stemming from the couple's nationalities. It was ordered transferred to Columbia in June due to extensive pre-trial publicity in Cape Girardeau.

Esker's trial began Wednesday when testimony from prosecution witnesses was heard. Defense witnesses will be heard today, and the jury is expected to deliver a verdict late in the day.

Ms. Kocovski has twice pleaded guilty to a charge of child abuse, but those pleas were rejected by Circuit Court Judge Frank Conley, who questioned her mental condition. Court officials said Ms. Kocovski had become hysterical earlier when she saw Esker in Boone County jail. She now is undergoing evaluation at Fulton State Mental Hospital.

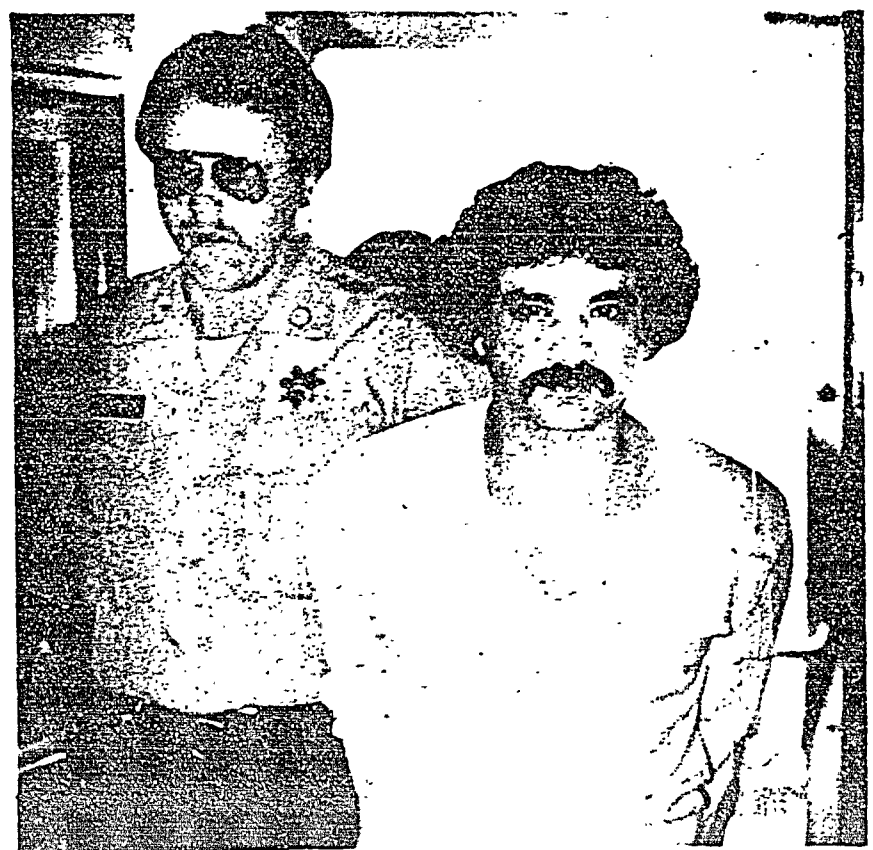
In a deposition read Wednesday, Ms. Kocovski claimed Esker was responsible for abusing Dejan. She also said he beat her several times while they lived in Cape Girardeau but that she did not go to police because she was afraid.

The prosecution hopes to prove Ms. Kocovski's charges.

In an opening statement, Limbaugh portrayed Esker as systematically depriving the child of food and physical comfort. His statement focused on the child's condition when discovered, and on circumstances leading to his discovery.

Hale W. Brown, Esker's defense attorney, did not argue the physical

(See DEFENSE, Page 8A)



Akbar Esker, Cape Girardeau, is ushered into the Boone County Courthouse where he is standing trial for child abuse.

In town today

7 p.m. Electrical Board of Engineers meets, third floor County-City Building.
8 p.m. Piano recital by Nancy Wade, Fine Arts recital hall.
8:15 p.m. "On Golden Pond," Summer Repertory Theater, University Theater. Tickets are \$5 for adults, \$3 for senior citizens and \$1 for students.